



The President's Daily Brief

4 February 1972

47

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Peking has denounced the US peace plan but its comments differ in some aspects from those of Hanoi.
(Page 1)



25X1



25X1

Chile. (Page 4)

25X1

On Page 5 we note a change in Communist propaganda concerning the Viet Cong's seven-point peace proposal.

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CHINA-VIETNAM-US

Peking has loyally weighed in to denounce the President's eight-point plan as an attempt to impose "truculent and unreasonable" conditions for a US troop withdrawal. Chinese commentary, however, has stressed the importance of troop withdrawal while fuzzing the political aspects of both the North Vietnamese and US proposals. Unlike the North Vietnamese, the Chinese have refrained from characterizing the proposal as "deceitful."

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The most obvious divergence from Hanoi's treatment of the US plan appears in a Chinese account of an article in the North Vietnamese party press on 29 January attacking the US package. The Chinese version of this article carefully deleted those portions of the Vietnamese comment which claimed there was nothing new in the proposal. It also omitted Hanoi's characterization of the Viet Cong seven-point proposal as one comprising "two basic and closely related points." This Chinese reluctance to couple the military and political aspects of a Vietnamese settlement as closely as does Hanoi has been evident at least since Pham Van Dong's visit to Peking last November.

The Chinese seem to be trying to protect their own interests vis-a-vis both Hanoi and Washington. Peking is reluctant to accuse the President of bargaining in bad faith on the very eve of his visit to China. At the same time it is anxious to indicate to Hanoi that it is not deserting the Vietnamese cause in order to strike a deal with the United States. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Peking's own priorities place an American military withdrawal from the Indochina peninsula ahead of a political settlement in Saigon thoroughly acceptable to its North Vietnamese allies.

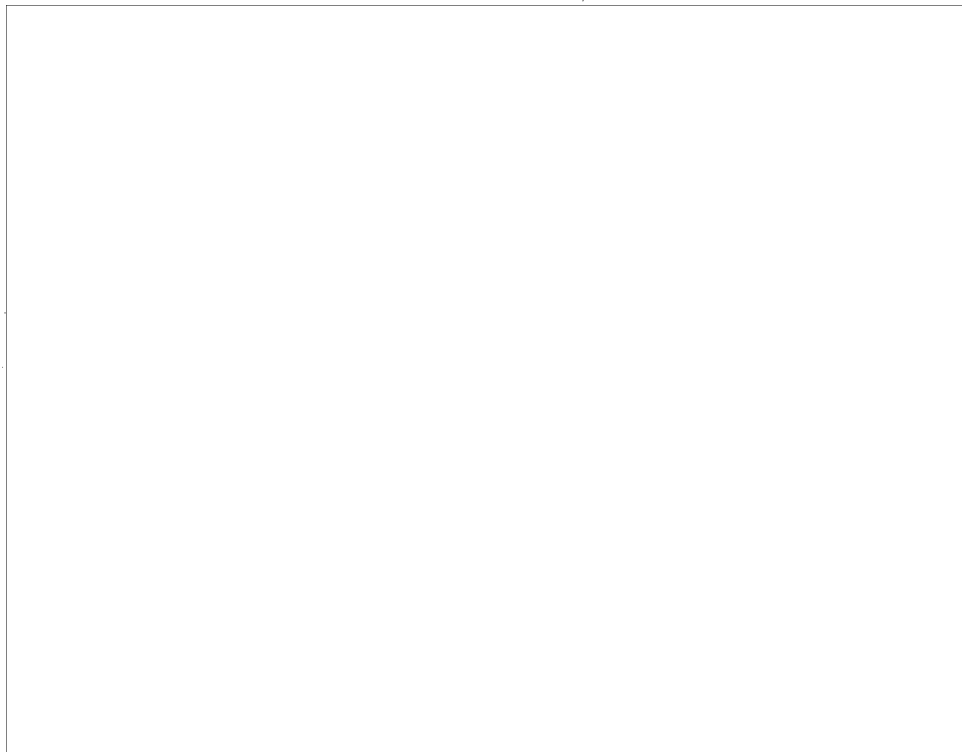
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The Chinese, however, are painfully aware that their leverage on Hanoi is limited, particularly in areas in which the Vietnamese believe their vital interests are involved. Peking knows that too much pressure on Hanoi would simply push the Vietnamese into the arms of Moscow. In these circumstances, the Chinese are likely merely to let Hanoi know how the situation looks from Peking, hoping that their allies will then draw the proper conclusion as to what course to pursue.

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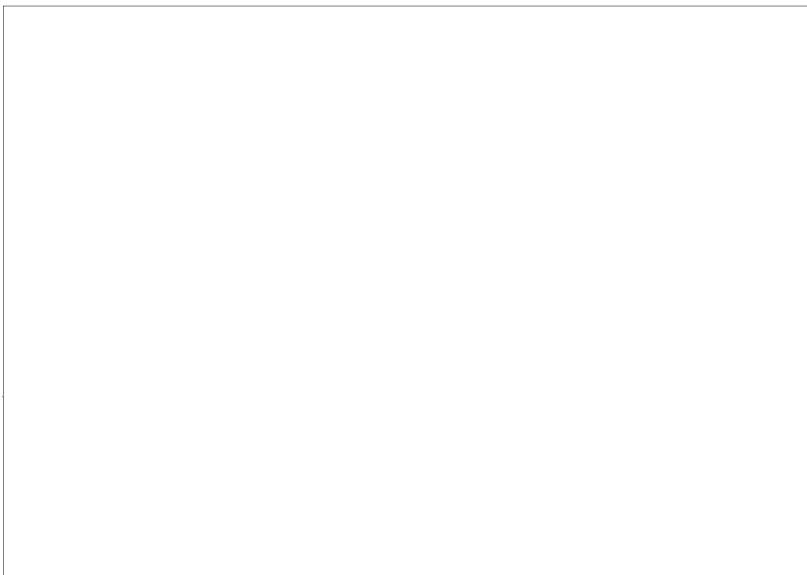


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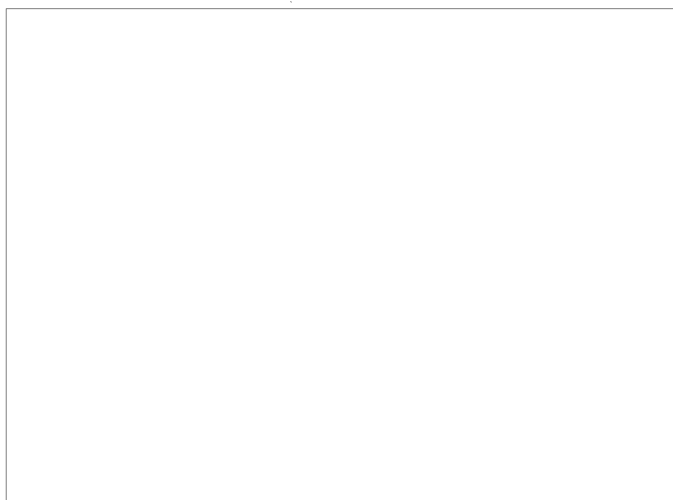
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NOTE

Vietnam: Communist propaganda yesterday concerning the new "elaboration" of the seven-point Viet Cong proposal contains a noteworthy change from Wednesday's formulation. In their original statement Wednesday in Hanoi, the Viet Cong had declared that the "specific terminal date" for the completion of the US withdrawal "will also be the date for the release" of all prisoners. This left the impression that no prisoners would be freed until the end of the US withdrawal. In their statement on Thursday, however, the Communists talked of a "terminal date" for prisoner release as well as for withdrawal. This language suggests that the Communists have not in fact changed their earlier position--contained in the seven-point plan--which envisions a possible agreement on a phased release of prisoners to match the pace of the US withdrawal.

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